January 28, 2021

To: Chairperson Lathrop and Members of the Judiciary Committee



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From: Taylor Givens-Dunn, Lobbyist, Voices for Children in Nebraska

Re: LB 308 - Provide grants for juvenile indigent legal defense

Every child is entitled to due process and equal protection under the law. Voices for Children in Nebraska supports LB 308, because the creation of the Juvenile Indigent Defense Fund will provide resources to assist counties in fulfilling their obligation to provide for effective assistance of legal counsel for juveniles, ensuring that youth across our entire state have meaningful access to one of the great protections of the American justice system: the constitutional right to counsel.

Every youth facing a proceeding in which the government can take their liberty, remove them from home and family, put them on medication, or commit them to a psychiatric institution, boot camp, or YRTC should have a lawyer to ensure their rights are protected and they understand what is happening and why. While we posit that access to counsel is a fundamental right, we understand the cost and support LB 308, which creates a fund that would be used to provide legal services to juveniles in juvenile court and provide resources to assist counties in fulfilling their obligation to provide for effective assistance of legal counsel for juveniles. Voices for Children in Nebraska would like to thank Senator Pansing Brooks for bringing this important legislation, and as always, this Committee for your time and consideration. We urge you to advance LB 308.

Sincerely,

Taylor Givens-Dunn